

AL-MUḤĀSIBĪ: ON SCRUPULOUSNESS AND THE PURSUIT OF LIVELIHOODS: TWO EXCERPTS FROM HIS AL-MAKĀSIB WA³L-WARĀ^ʿ

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Al-Muḥāsibī's concern in his *Makāsib* is to articulate the dynamic balance and proper relation between the outward pursuit of livelihoods and the inner cultivation of the spiritual virtues, such as *tawakkul* (reliance on Allāh), *wara^ʿ* (scrupulousness) and *ṭā^ʿa* (obedience). Once this balance and relation are understood and put into practice, then it can be seen that the cultivation of the inner virtues is compatible with engagement in the daily life of the world, and even demands it for their realization.

Keywords: al-Muḥāsibī; *al-Makāsib wa al-Wara^ʿ*; livelihood; economics; reliance; scrupulousness; spiritual and ethical practices; Islamic intellectual tradition; mysticism.

The Life and Works of al-Muḥāsibī (165-243-/781-857)¹

Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-‘Anazī al-Muḥāsibī was born in Baṣra, ‘Iraq circa 165/782, and moved, while still young, to Baghdād, where he settled and lived for most of his life, and passed away there in 243/857. He

1. This biographical sketch is largely based on al-Imām ‘Abdul Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā’irīn: al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, 1973). Cf. Margaret Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad: A Study of the Life and Teaching of Ḥārith b. Asad Al-Muḥāsibī* (London: Sheldon Press, 1977); Gavin Picken, *Spiritual Purification in Islam: The Life and Works of Al-Muḥāsibī* (New York: Routledge, 2011). See also the editors’ respective introductions in Al-Ḥārith ibn Asad Al-Muḥāsibī, *Al-Makāsib: Al-Rizq al-Ḥalāl wa Ḥaqīqat al-Tawakkul ‘alā Allāh*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Uthmān al-Khusht (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qur’ān, 1984), 7-27; *ibid.*, *Al-Makāsib*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad ‘Aṭā’ (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyyah, 1987), 5-34; *ibid.*, *Al-Makāsib*, ed. Sa’d Karīm al-Fiqqī (Alexandria: Dār Ibn Khaldūn, n.d.), 3-5. See also the useful survey of his life and works in Sahin Filiz, “The Founder of the Muḥāsabah School of Sufism: Al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī,” in *Islamic Studies*, vol. 45, no. 1 (Spring 2006), 59-81.

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flourished during the peak of ‘Abbāsid power, culture and prestige and was a contemporary or close contemporary of many luminaries such as Imām al-Shāfi‘ī (767-820/150-204),² Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (780–855/164–241),³ Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām (d. 224/838),⁴ al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 297/910)⁵ and other notable scholars of the time.

Not very much is known for certain about his childhood and his life as a young man. From the few anecdotes in the biographical sources we have of him, it would seem that he was possessed of an imposing, commanding personality, very intelligent and creative, forthright and to the point, honest and sincere. This reported exchange with one of his foremost students, al-Junayd al-Baghdādī, gives us an idea of his sharp intelligence and forthrightness:

Junayd would often say to al-Muḥasibī, “Seclusion is my delight, but you would draw me out from it into the distraction of seeing people and the streets.” Al-Muḥasibī responded, “How often would you say to me, ‘My delight is in my seclusion!’ Even if half of creation were to draw near to me I would not have found delight in their company, and if the other half were to keep away from me I would not have felt alienated in the least by their aloofness.”⁶

It is clear to us from a perusal of his extant writings that he was well learned in the disciplines of *kalām* (dialectical theology), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *ḥadīth* (prophetic traditions), *tafsīr* (Qur’ānic exegesis), and, especially, *taṣawwuf*,⁷ or the science of the purification of the self (*tazkiyat al-nafs*⁸). Among his many

2. An good, short introduction to him in the context of his legal thought is Joseph E. Lowry, ed. & trans. *Al-Shāfi‘ī: The Epistle on Legal Thought* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), xviii-xx.

3. A biography of him in English is Walter M. Patton, *Ahmed ibn Hanbal and the Mihna* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1897); a newer one is Christopher Melchert, *Ahmad Ibn Hanbal* (Oxford: One World, 2006).

4. Well known author of *Kitāb al-Amwāl*; see Imran Ahsan Khan Nyazee, trans. *The Book of Revenue* (Garnet, 2002).

5. An early well known master of the spiritual path (*al-taṣawwuf*); see the study by Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd: A Study of a Third/Ninth Century Mystic with an Edition of His Writings*, reprint (E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2014).

6. Gavin Picken, *Spiritual Purification*, 55; Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā’irīn*, 30.

7. Or at least that proto-discipline that would later be formally denoted by that term. For a discussion on the origins and historical development of *taṣawwuf*, see Nuḥ Ha Mim Keller, “The Place of Tasawwuf in Traditional Islamic Sciences,” (<http://www.masud.co.uk/ISLAM/muh/sufitlk.htm>); cf. Shaikh Shahidullah Faridi, “The Meaning of Tasawwuf,” (<http://www.masud.co.uk/ISLAM/misc/faridi.htm>).

8. For purification of the self according to al-Muḥasibī, see Gavin Picken,

teachers were Yazīd b. Hārūn (d. 206/821)⁹ from whom he learnt many ḥadīth, and Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim Ibn Sallām (d. 224/838)¹⁰ from whom he acquired (among others) the sciences of the Qur’ān. As for jurisprudence, it would seem that he was inclined to the Shāfi‘ī school and associated with the scholarly circle of Imām al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/820) if not with the Imām himself, with whom he was roughly contemporaneous. As for his many students, the most famous of them is Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd ibn Muḥammad al-Baghdādī (d. 297/910),¹¹ while others include Abū al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Nūrī (d. 295/907), and the Shāfi‘ī jurist, Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn Ibn Ṣāliḥ ibn Khayrān (d. 310/923).

He lived very frugally even though he came from a wealthy family background. Due to his scrupulousness he declined his inheritance of about seventy thousand dirhams that his father had left him because of the latter’s Mu‘tazilī leanings. But perhaps his declination was also due to his dislike of the care and worry that often comes with the responsibility of wealth. His appellation *muḥāsibī* points to the fact that he was well known as one who was always examining his conscience and scrutinizing his soul in order to hold it to account for every action, inward or outward. This practice of self-scrutiny he had raised to the level of a very articulate and fine-tuned spiritual discipline, a fact quite self-evident even from a cursory perusal of many of his extant works, such as the one from which two excerpts are translated here.

He was well known for his polemics against the Mu‘tazilites, and in fact, wrote a few works to refute their doctrines.¹² However, that did not endear him to some of the traditionalists (or ḥadīth masters) like Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, who were strongly adverse to theological disputation and argumentation even if undertaken for the defense of the faith.¹³ Unlike Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and other scholars who were persecuted for refusing to submit to the state imposed Mu‘tazilī doctrine of the created Qur’ān, al-Muḥāsibī seemed to have escaped

Spiritual Purification, 168-215.

9. Well known also for his opposition to the doctrine of the createdness of the Qur’ān.

10. Author of the well-known work on public revenue, *Kitāb al-Amwāl*, trans. Imran Ahsan Khan Nyazee, *The Book of Revenue* (Garnet, 2002).

11. A biography is Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, new ed. (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2013; originally, Luzac & Co., 1976).

12. Such as *al-Aql wa Fahm al-Qur’ān*, ed. Ḥusayn al-Quwwatli (Beirut: Dār al-Kindī, 1982).

13. Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā’irīn*, 14. For a detailed investigation on this issue, see Gavin Picken, “Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Muḥāsibī: A Study of Early Conflicting Scholarly Methodologies,” in *Arabica*, 55:3 (July 2008), 337-361.

the infamous *miḥnah* or inquisition instituted by the caliph al-Ma'mūn,¹⁴ a fact that was probably due to his low profile relative to other more prominent scholars like Imām Aḥmad, and his own aversion to the public life and consequently his negligible political or social influence amongst the general populace.

Of the thirty or so works of his which are extant, the most important and systematic is *Kitāb al-Ri'āyat li Ḥuqūq Allāh* (The Book of Upholding the Rights of God),¹⁵ which many scholars view to be the precursor and model for Imām al-Ghazālī's magnum opus, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (The Book of the Revivification of the Sciences of Religion). In the *Ri'āyat*, al-Muḥāsibī clarifies the manner by which one is to attain to the spiritual virtues such as *tawba* (repentance), *taqwā* (mindfulness), *wara'* (scrupulousness), *ikhhlās* (sincerity), and avoid the spiritual maladies of *'ujb* (self-conceit), *kibr* (arrogance), *ghirra* (self-delusion) and *ḥasad* (envy). In the words of Margaret Smith:

This is al-Muḥāsibī's great treatise on the interior life, which reveals a profound knowledge of human nature and its weaknesses, while in the means which he suggests for combating these weaknesses and for attaining to the single-hearted service of God, he shews also the discerning wisdom and inspired insight of a true spiritual director and shepherd of souls.¹⁶

For Attasians¹⁷ and others who focus on the concept of *ta'dīb*¹⁸ and its elaboration as the framework for revisioning education from within the perspective of the Worldview of Islam,¹⁹ they will be interested to know that:

Al-Muḥāsibī concludes his book with the section entitled *Kitāb Ta'dīb al-Murīd* in which he describes a programme designed to govern the conduct of the slave 'by day and by night', being

14. See Lee A. Koelliker, "The *Miḥna*: Ma'mūn's Inquisition for Supremacy," in *Historical Research*, vol. 1 no. 1 (December 2011), 35-46; cf. Walter Melville Patton, *Aḥmed Ibn Ḥanbal and the Miḥna* (New York: Cosimo, 2010).

15. Ed. Margaret Smith (London: Luzac & Co., 1940); ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Abd al-Ḥamid al-Barr (Manṣūrah: Dār al-Yaqīn, 1999).

16. Margaret Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, 45; also cited in Picken, *Spiritual Purification*, 69-71;

17. i.e., students, followers and supporters of Professor Dr. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, especially those who believe in and are committed to his systemic educational and Islamization program.

18. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1991); cf., Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1998).

19. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam: An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 2001).

always mindful of the One Whom he serves, of the constant self-discipline required to remain on this path and to guard against the temptations, which may assail him after he has begun to serve God with his whole body, mind and soul.²⁰

Some of his other works of significance are *Kitāb Fahm al-Qurʾān* (The Book of Understanding the Qurʾān)²¹ on the virtues of the Qurʾān, juristics of the Qurʾān, and its stylistics and on refutation of the Muʿtazilah with respect to some theological issues therein; *Kitāb al-ʿIlm* (The Book of Knowledge),²² in which he categorizes knowledge into three categories, namely, knowledge of the lawful and unlawful (*ʿilm al-zāhir* or outward knowledge), knowledge of the Afterlife and the spiritual states (*ʿilm al-bāṭin* or inward knowledge), and knowledge of God and His relation to creation; *Risālat Ādāb al-Nufūs* or *Risālah fī al-Akhlāq* (Treatise on the Comportment of the Self),²³ on moral character; and *Kitāb al-Tawahhūm* (The Book of Presentiment),²⁴ on the destiny of the soul after death and eschatological events. Another work of his which is of great significance for us in acquiring understanding of the cultivation of the spiritual life in the everyday context of earning our livelihoods is the *Kitāb al-Makāsib wa al-Waraʿ*,²⁵ which is discussed below after the following section.

His Influence on Islamic and Western Thought²⁶

His influence on subsequent generations of scholars who wrote and taught on the inner dimension of the religious life and the purification of the self is immense and well-acknowledged, so much so he was given the epithet, *ustādh al-sāʾirīn* (the teacher of all the rest) by ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (1910-1978).²⁷ He was also influential on subsequent scholars in his use of the

20. Picken, *Spiritual Purification*, 69.

21. Ed., Ḥusayn al-Quwwatli (Beirut: Dār al-Kindī, 1982).

22. Ed. Muḥammad al-Abid Mazālī (Tunis: Dār al-Tūnisīyyah, 1975).

23. Ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭāʾ (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, 1987).

24. Ed. Arthur J. Arberry (Cairo: Lajnat al-Taʿlif waʾl-Tarjamah waʾl-Nashr, 1937); ed. Muḥammad Uthmān al-Khusht (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qurʾān, 1999).

25. Ed. ʿAbdul Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭāʾ (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyyah, 1987); trans. Adi Setia, *Scrupulousness and the Pursuit of Livelihoods* (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2016).

26. Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sāʾirīn*, 17 ff; see also the relevant sections in Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*.

27. Grand Imam of the University of al-Azhar from 1973-1978, who did a doctoral study on him; for an important review of his role at al-Azhar, see Moshe Albo and Yoram Meital, “The Independent Path of Shaykh al-Azhar ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd,” in *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 54, no. 02 (2014), 159–182.

kalām (dialectical) method to argue for orthodoxy (*Ahl al-Sunnah*) against the Mu‘tazilites, and hence the Ash‘arī theologians (*mutakallimīn*) consider him their forerunner. His influence on Ibn Sīnā is also apparent in the latter’s poem on the soul.²⁸ Most notable is his influence on al-Ghazālī in many of the latter works, especially the *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*. As noted by Margaret Smith, through al-Ghazālī, al-Muḥāsibī also have had a great impact on Christian scholars such as Barhebraeus (d. 1286), including Christian scholasticism (as exemplified in Thomas Aquinas) and Jewish mysticism (as in the Zoharic teachings).²⁹

The following citations from the doctoral study of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd give an idea of the high regard in which he was held by many notable Muslim scholars who came after him: Al-Tamīmī in his *al-Kawākib al-Durriyyah* says that al-Muḥāsibī is “The imām of the Muslims in *fiqh*, *taṣawwuf*, ḥadīth and *kalām*.”³⁰ According to Shaykh Zāhid al-Kawtharī, “Indeed Imām al-Muḥāsibī has a big influence on Imām al-Ghazālī. Imām al-Ghazālī infused *Kitāb al-Ri‘āyat* into his book, *al-Iḥyā’*.”³¹ The influence of al-Muḥāsibī is apparent in the works of al-Ghazālī like the *Munqidh* and the *Iḥyā’*....al-Ghazālī himself readily acknowledges his indebtedness to al-Muḥāsibī.³² He cites from him in the *Iḥyā’* and says, “al-Muḥāsibī is the best of the Community in regard to the science of *mu‘āmalat*.”³³

Gavin Picken notes that the famous Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) himself has shown appreciation for the teachings of al-Muḥāsibī, and cites him as saying, “He possessed knowledge, virtue, asceticism and discourse regarding the spiritual realities (*al-ḥaqā’iq*), which has been widely celebrated.”³⁴

Kitāb al-Makāsib wa’l-Warā’

The full title of the book is *Kitāb al-Makāsib wa’l-Warā’ wa’l-Shubha wa Bayān Mubāḥihā wa’l-Maḥzūrihā wa Ikhtilāf al-Nās fi Ṭalabihā wa’l-Radd ‘alā’l-Ghālīḥina fihi*, or “The Book of Livelihoods: Scrupulousness and Dubiousness; Clarifying Permissible and Impermissible Livelihoods, and People’s Diverse Ways in Seeking Them; and Refuting Those Who Err in the Course of It.” According to Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, al-Muḥāsibī wrote this book in the latter part of his life,³⁵ and thus it reflects in a succinct manner the main themes of

28. *qaṣīdat al-‘aymiyyah fī al-naṣf*.

29. See the relevant sections in Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*.

30. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā’irīn*, 13 and 18.

31. *ibid.*, 16.

32. *ibid.*, 17.

33. *ibid.*, 17, 18; Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, 269 ff.

34. Picken, *Spiritual Purification*, 220, citing Ibn Taymiyyah’s *Majmū‘āt al-Fatāwā*, 6: 521.

35. Maḥmūd, *Ustādh al-Sā’irīn*, 52.

the spiritual life that had concerned him in his earlier works, but here in the specific context of the pursuit of livelihoods.

The book can be read as an elucidation of the manner in which people can and should go about living the introspective inward life of spiritual awareness even while in the context of the active outward life of immersion in the daily care for the provisioning of livelihoods for themselves and their dependents. Specifically, the book details the manner we are to properly apply the spiritual virtues of scrupulousness (*wara'*), detachment (*zuhd*), reliance (*tawakkul*) and self-examination (*muḥāsaba*) in the course of our daily life in both personal devotion (*ʿibāda*) and interpersonal transaction (*muʿāmala*). Again, Margaret Smith summarizes it very well with her usual eloquence:

In this work al-Muḥāsibī modifies the quietist tendencies of certain of his predecessors, and condemns excessive rigorism in the matter of what is dubious, while continuing to advocate the need for abstinence and asceticism. The basic principle in these matters, he teaches, should be reliance upon God (*tawakkul*), Who can be trusted to provide for His creatures, and therefore they have no excuse for recourse to what is unlawful or doubtful in origin. In this connection al-Muḥāsibī sets forth a fine conception of God as Creator, with discerning knowledge of, and care for, His creatures. Faith in God and the remembrance, with the lips as with the heart, that He is the Sole Provider, the Lord of life and death, and Sovereign over all things, will lead men to this complete trust in Him, and to the observance of His sanctions. But this does not mean that a man should refrain from taking lawful means to earn a livelihood, or live in idleness at the expense of others. The right type of abstinence (*wara'*) is to abstain from what God has prohibited and what is abhorrent to Him of action, whether in word or in deed, and of thought and motive, and what this can be known by self-examination before proceeding to action.³⁶

In any way the book can be read as a *kalāmo-ṣūfī* dialectical take on the meaning and purpose of working for a living and how the various religious virtues such as scrupulousness (*wara'*) and reliance (*tawakkul*) are to be actualized in the course of it. Al-Muḥāsibī masterfully integrates the theological (*kalāmī*), legal (*fiqhī*) and ethico-spiritual (*ṣūfī*) dimensions of earning a livelihood, and navigates a fine, dynamic balance between the extremes³⁷ that one can be prone to in each of these dimensions. And this balance, harmony, comportment (*adab*) that he has in mind is best captured by citing his own words regarding the ends of

36. Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, 50.

37. Basically, the extreme of idleness due to a misunderstanding of reliance (*tawakkul*) leading to the neglect of livelihood altogether, and the extreme of over-attachment to worldly gain due to lack of reliance leading to disregard for divine sanctions.

livelihoods:

Therefore, when you wish to go to your market or do something for your livelihood, or take up a craft or become an agent (*wakālah*) or engage in some other vocations in order to seek the licit and to imitate the practice of Allāh's Messenger—Allāh bless him and grant him peace—and to seek recompense (*thawāb*) for yourself and your dependents, to earn provision for them, and in order to be independent of people while showing compassion to brethren and neighbours, and to pay the obligatory alms and discharge every obligatory right, then hold out hope through these efforts that you shall meet Allāh—glorified and exalted be He—while your countenance is as the moon on the night when it is full.³⁸

It should be interesting and rewarding to compare the *Makāsib* with other works by some of his close contemporaries which also touch on the theme of the proper balance and relation between devotion to worship and engagement in the pursuit of one's livelihood, or, how one can go about being *in* the world while not being *of* the world. Two such scholars come to my mind, namely Imām al-Shaybānī, author of *Kitāb al-Kasb* (Book of Earning a Livelihood),³⁹ and al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, author of *Ādāb al-Murīdīn wa Bayān al-Kasb* (The Comportment of the Seekers and the Clarification of Earning a Livelihood).⁴⁰

Two Excerpts from the *Makāsib*

In what follows are two translated excerpts from the first two sections⁴¹ of the *Makāsib* serving to convey some of the salient aspects of Muḥāsibī's thinking on this topic of ensuring a proper balance between the inner life of the spirit

38. *Al-Makāsib*, ed., 'Aḡā', 66-67.

39. Trans. Adi Setia (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2011).

40. Ed. 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Abd Allāh Barakah (Cairo:). Some other scholars who wrote on the integration of the pursuit of livelihood (*kasb*) into the cultivation of the life of the spirit (*taṣawwuf*), are Ibn Abī al-Dunyā (d. 281/894) in his *Iṣlāḥ al-Māl*, trans. Nicholas Mahdi Lock and Adi Setia, *The Restoration of Wealth* (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2016); Abū Bakr al-Khallāl (d. 311/923) in his *al-Hathth 'alā al-Tijārah wa al-Ṣinā'ah wa al-'Amal*, trans. Gibril Fouad Haddad, *The Exhortation to Trade, Industry and Work* (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2013); al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 502/1108) in the relevant sections of his *al-Dharī'ah ila Makārim al-Sharī'ah*; al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) in his *Kitāb Ādāb al-Kasb wa al-Ma'āsh*, trans. Adi Setia, *The Book of the Proprieties of Earning and Living* (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2013); and al-Lubūdī (ca. 900/1500) in his *Faḍl al-Iktisāb*, trans. Adi Setia, *The Virtue of Earning a Living* (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2014); and many others.

41. That is, after al-Muḥāsibī's preamble or introduction before he goes into the topic proper.

and the outer life of earning a livelihood. I have mainly relied on the edition prepared by ‘Abdul Qādir Aḥmad ‘Aṭā’,⁴² and collated it with the editions of Khusht⁴³ and al-Fiqqī.⁴⁴ The translation is lightly annotated, especially to clarify passages that may seem unclear to some readers. As for the documentations of the ḥadīths, more serious readers may refer to those given in the relevant footnotes in the three editions of the text.⁴⁵

**1. ON CLARIFYING THE OBLIGATION OF RELIANCE
THAT IS INCUMBENT UPON BOTH THE ELITE AND THE LAY,
AND THE ACTIVITIES FOR SECURING SUSTENANCE AND FORGOING IT⁴⁶**

The reliance (*al-tawakkul*) that is enjoined and mandatory on the generality of people is to affirm as true (*al-taṣḍīq*) what Allāh—glorified and exalted is He—has informed them as regards the apportioning, securing and guaranteeing of the sufficiency of the provisions He has conveyed to them, and the arrival of the victuals He has apportioned within the times He has prescribed—with an affirmation that is settled firmly in their hearts such that it repels from them all doubts and ambiguities; and (an affirmation) by which their certitude is purified, and by which are established the realities of the knowledge that He is indeed the Creator-Sustainer, the Lifegiver and Lifetaker, the Bestower-Withholder, the Sole Disposer of all affairs.

When this knowledge has filled the hearts and is secured in the bonds of belief, the tongues will express it in affirmation of their masters,⁴⁷ and they will have recourse to it upon remembrance in full awareness, whereupon the hearts become entitled to (be given) the designation of reliance.⁴⁸

However, if the hearts should become estranged from holding fast to these character traits⁴⁹ and the tongues cease to affirm them, and doubt and misgiving enter into the hearts regarding them, then they will be estranged

42. (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyyah, 1987).

43. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qur’ān, 1983).

44. Sa’d Karīm al-Fiqqī (Alexandria: Dār Ibn Khaldūn, n.d.).

45. It needs to be noted that as an early figure, al-Muḥāsibī came well before the time of most of the major ḥadīth scholars and their ḥadīth compilations.

46. Ed., al-Khusht, 44 ff; ed., al-Fiqqī, 14 ff.

47. This is in reference to the hearts as the masters of the tongues.

48. i.e., in such a state they deserve to be called reliant, to have the quality of reliance attributed to them.

49. i.e., character traits deserving of the designation of reliance.

from the praiseworthy designation (*al-ism al-mahmūd*),⁵⁰ thus unravelling their bond with these character traits, and thereby causing them to be deserving of the blameworthy designation (*al-ism al-madhmun*).⁵¹

And that it should be so is because what makes the hearts deserving of the praiseworthy designation is the affirmation of the tongues and the enduring knowledge with effaces doubts and misgivings. This affirmation and knowledge are so (tightly) associated with the hearts such that should they lose even a fragment of that association, they exit into what is contrary to the state that they were once in affirmation and conviction of.⁵²

And this contrariness results when the hearts fall into the denial of what they have once affirmed to be true, or become doubtful of what they once have certitude of, or when they nullify the truth they have once affirmed. And so if the hearts should plummet into some of these contraries such that they depart from the praiseworthy designations,⁵³ they would then deviate into acquiring the blameworthy designations, and become estranged thereby from belief in Allāh—glorified and exalted be He—and from reliance on Him. And what wrests the hearts from reliance on Allāh is that which we have described and which the hearts hold fast to.⁵⁴

Now, the character traits of most people in respect of the obligation of reliance and its inception, and of such qualities by virtue of which they become deserving of the designation of reliance, are that they harbour hastiness in their hearts, become disconcerted when denied, prone to agitation in the heart over something they deem to be an affliction, given over to preoccupation with causes and digging into them, and love of plenty, avid desire for amassing wealth, and fretfulness over loss and joyfulness over gain.⁵⁵

And yet, in spite of those (blameworthy) traits, there still remain their firm bonds of belief (*al-uqūd*) in what we have described in regard to faith (*al-īmān*) and their affirmation of it. The indication for this is that when they go out in remembrance in the course of seeking sustenance from Allāh, they consciously concede in their hearts and on their tongues that they do not attain to anything of what they seek through their own scheming, and that their activity does not augment something for them in respect of (some gain for) themselves, nor lead them towards increment in something (that they seek), but that these

50. i.e., praiseworthy name of reliance.

51. i.e., blameworthy name of lack of reliance, or non-reliance.

52. i.e., they then pass from the state of reliance to non-reliance.

53. i.e., reliance and related praiseworthy character traits.

54. i.e., what destroy reliance on Allāh are those aforementioned blameworthy character traits.

55. al-Muḥāsibī is saying here that these all too common human shortcomings as such do not necessarily negate reliance.

activities only proceed from them as exertions of their natural disposition which underpins their physical constitution.⁵⁶

And that is because Allāh—glorified be He—has described people as a whole by saying, “*Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire—of women and sons, heaped-up sums of gold and silver, fine branded horses, and cattle and tilled land.*”⁵⁷

And He—glorified be He—says, “*No! But you love the immediate, and leave the Hereafter.*”⁵⁸

And He Most High says, “*And humankind is ever hasty.*”⁵⁹

And so He—glorified be He and exalted be His praise—informs us of these natural dispositions in humankind and creatures, and that these character traits are established in human beings. However, believers in general are characterized by reliance on Allāh Most High due to their belief in what we have described,⁶⁰ even if they do engage in these activities as part of their nature.

And the evidence for what we have said is that the believers as a whole are secure in the bonds of faith (*al-īmān*) in Allāh Most High and reliance (*al-tawakkul*) on Him, as we have described with regard to the articles of belief held in the hearts and affirmed on the tongues, such that they believe in the fact that Allāh Most High has said, “*And in the heaven is your sustenance and that which you are promised; And by the Lord of the heaven and the earth, it is surely the truth, even as it is true that you speak.*”⁶¹

And so He—exalted be His praise—have taken an oath upon Himself that it is truly He Who apportions sustenance among the creatures, and He fully guarantees sufficiency (*al-kifāya*) for them, and therefore it is incumbent on people to affirm the truth of what He has informed them of and sworn upon.

And so, whosoever affirms the truth thereof he is by his very affirmation (*taṣdīq*) and faith (*īmān*) a reliant believer (*muʾmin mutawakkil*); but whosoever denies or doubts the truth thereof he is thereby an obstinate unbeliever (*muʾanid kāfir*) in what He—exalted be His praise—has informed us of in His Book.

These activities do not cease to proceed from the natural dispositions and the tendencies of people to desire abundant wealth, to be in a hurry, and to

56. i.e., they know for a fact that activity as such does not augment them in anything, but rather that it is something that proceeds from the very nature of being human, and so they engage in activity while not placing their trust and reliance on their activity but on Allāh.

57. Āl ‘Imrān: 14.

58. *al-Qiyāmah*: 20-21.

59. *al-Isrā’*: 11.

60. i.e., that Allāh is the sole Disposer of all affairs.

61. *al-Dhāriyāt*: 22—23.

seek out the means to wealth by various avenues; and yet, despite this, Allāh—glorified be He—does not remove the designation of reliance from them, since the bonds of belief in what we have described are already well established in their hearts. And this concordance (of their hearts) with these bonds of belief accompanies them in the course of their activities that arise out of their natural dispositions, for such activities arising out of natural dispositions do not cause them to depart from the affirmation that we have enjoined on them. This is because Allāh Most High does not require them to worship him by abandoning these activities; rather, He only requires their worship by way of discharging the duty of obedience (*al-ṭāʿa*) and by way of acquiring things only in the manner that He has approved.

And so, when they discharge the duty of obedience, and find concord with Allāh—glorified and exalted be He—in regard to their activities, then their creaturely traits and natural dispositions shall be of no harm to them. However, this is so long as they do not transgress the limits of Allāh—glorified and exalted be He—and take something from what is forbidden by Allāh to them, in which case they would be disobedient to Allāh—glorified and exalted be He—by virtue of that deed. However, they do not thereby become deprived of that praiseworthy designation unless they unbind the bonds of faith that we have described, or disavow them by their speech.⁶²

Thus, once the acknowledgement of Allāh Most High is established in the hearts, and the tongues are in affirmation of it, then whenever they transgress the divine limits they become less deserving of the designation of reliance, and as a result their reliance becomes deficient, and they fall short of fully discharging its obligations. Such is the case because Allāh—exalted be His praise—has allowed people to be active in the seeking of their livelihoods, but He has not enjoined upon them the elimination of what is (imprinted) in their nature.⁶³

And the evidence for that (allowance) is that Allāh—glorified and exalted be He—has said, “*O Believers! Partake of what is permissible and wholesome in the earth.*”⁶⁴

And He—glorified and exalted be He—says, “*Men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allāh.*”⁶⁵

And thus He has permitted for them activity (*al-ḥaraka*) while forbidding them from transgressing His limits—exalted be His praise.

62. This means that disobedience *per se* does not negate reliance, but it can render it deficient or imperfect.

63. Such as the natural inclination to hastiness, desire and worry which has to be controlled and disciplined.

64. *al-Baqarah*: 168.

65. *al-Nūr*: 37.

And the Prophet—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him—has said, “The most wholesome of what the believer eats is from his own earning.”

And this ḥadīth is evidence for what we have described concerning the permissibility of activity in the seeking of sustenance (*al-rizq*), and that the activist in the course of his seeking is not exempt from the obligation of reliance as expounded in the Allāh’s Book⁶⁶ and in the practice of His Messenger—Allāh’s peace and blessing be on him—and as exemplified in the way of life of his chief Companions—may Allāh be pleased with them.⁶⁷

A group of people has entertained the notion that reliance is not established for those aspiring to it⁶⁸ except by abandoning the active seeking of sustenance and by becoming aloof from its hustle and bustle.⁶⁹ They deny that there is permission from the Book of Allāh Most High or the practice of His Messenger—on him be peace—for such an activity.⁷⁰

They are thus in ignorance of what we have related from Ismā‘īl bin Ibrāhīm from al-A‘māsh from Ibrāhīm from Ā‘ishah—Allāh be pleased with her—who said, “The Messenger of Allāh—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him—has said, ‘The best of what a person eats is from his own earning.’” And this is a report (*ḥabar*) from the Messenger of Allāh—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him—which is not rejected by people of knowledge and narration (*ahl al-‘ilm wa al-naql*), and I do not know them to have entertained disagreement (amongst themselves) regarding it.

And indeed it has been reported from the Prophet—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him—that he said, “Allāh did not raise a prophet except that he was (a shepherd) shepherding sheep,” whereupon it was said to him, “And not even you, O Messenger of Allāh?” and he said, “I used to shepherd sheep for the people of Makkah at al-Qarārīṭ.”⁷¹

And the Prophet—Allāh’s peace and blessing be on him—had set out at the beginning of his affair⁷² heading for Syria for trade.

And Allāh—exalted be His praise—has said concerning the story of Musā (Moses)—upon him be peace—“*And what is that in thy right hand, O Musā? He*

66. That is, the Qur’ān.

67. The upshot of this elucidation is that the heart of the activist in the course of his activity is to be reliant on Allāh and *not* on his activity as such.

68. or those claiming or deeming themselves reliant.

69. And its concomitant care and worry.

70. This group mistakenly claims that activity (*ḥaraka*) negates reliance, and that to be truly reliant one has to forgo activity and be idle.

71. Al-Qarārīṭ may refer to an area on the outskirts of Makkah also known as Ajyād or to a minor unit of currency at the time.

72. i.e., at the beginning of his life’s journey before his divine appointment as the Last Prophet.

said: *This is my staff whereon I lean, and wherewith I bear down branches for my sheep, and wherein I find other uses.*⁷³

And He says in the story of Shu‘ayb and Musā—on both be peace—“*Truly, I intend to marry you to one of these two daughters of mine on condition that you hire yourself to me for (the term of) eight pilgrimages. Then if you complete ten it will be of your own accord, for I would not make it hard for you.*”⁷⁴

And He says in the story of Dāwūd (David)—on whom be peace—“*And We made the iron supple unto him, saying: Make long coats of mail and measure the links thereof. And do right.*”⁷⁵

And this (pursuit of livelihoods) are found in the stories of the Prophets—on whom be peace—and they are the cream of the best of His creation, and we have sufficed ourselves thereof by recounting the way of our Prophet—Allāh’s peace and blessing be on him—and his Companions—Allāh be pleased with them. And I shall henceforth describe for you some aspects of the way they had followed in this regard, if Allāh Most High wills so.

2. ACTIVITY IN EARNING FOR SEEKING SUSTENANCE AND THE DIFFERENCE THEREIN WITH REGARD TO ITS PRAISEWORTHINESS AND BLAMEWORTHINESS⁷⁶

When people have subscribed to the what we have described of the bonds of belief (*al-‘uqūd*) that render believers deserving of the appellation of reliance—such that these bonds are established (in the hearts) along with the activity of earning a living, and by virtue of which bonds they become duty bound to the overall imperative of reliance—then the blameworthiness of activity in this regard pertains to transgressing (*al-ta‘addī*) against what Allāh has commanded and exceeding (*al-tajāwuz*) His limits (*ḥudūd*) in the course of these activities, and in the manner of taking and giving (*al-akhḍh wa al-i‘ṭā’*) that is involved therein.

And that is because when Allāh—glorified be He—enjoined reliance on His creation,⁷⁷ and gave them permission to engage in activity in the seeking of livelihood—and (also) because of their tendency to be carried away by their desire for hastening it—He set down for them the limits of engagement in activity, and enjoined upon them certain obligations that He has ordained and

73. *Ṭā Hā*: 17-18.

74. *al-Qaṣaṣ*: 27.

75. *Ṣaba’*: 10.

76. Ed., al-Khusht, 51 ff; ed., al-Fiqqī, 19 ff.

77. Or on people in general.

clarified in His Book and on the tongue of His Prophet—on whom be peace.

And thus, He the Most High says, “*And do not devour your property among yourselves in vanity,⁷⁸ nor seek by it to gain the hearing of the judges that you may knowingly devour a portion of the property of people wrongfully.*”⁷⁹

And He—exalted be His praise—says, “*O Believers! Give provision out of the wholesome things that you have earned.*”⁸⁰

And He—glorified be He—says, “*And do not seek the bad (with intent) to spend thereof (in charity).*”⁸¹

And he⁸²—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him—said, “*Truly Allāh has made inviolate upon you your blood and your property and your honour.*”

Thus Allāh the Almighty has clarified for people the obligation in regard thereof⁸³ in His Book, and in the practice of His Prophet—on whom be peace—and in what is agreed upon by people of knowledge, and it⁸⁴ is that they are to conform to the divine injunctions in their activities. If they should diverge from that conformity, then they would surely be guilty of contravening the divine ordinances.

And therefore, whosoever engages in activity in the manner that we have described with regard to standing up for what is right and desisting from exceeding the limits, and adhering to scrupulousness (*al-waraʿ*) in commerce and in the crafts, and through the course of every hustle and bustle⁸⁵ in respect thereof, then he is thereby in obedience to Allāh—glorified and exalted be He—and praiseworthy in the sight of the people of knowledge (*ahl al-ʿilm*).

And whosoever contravenes anything of what we have described, commits infractions in the course of his activity, and falls short of what is incumbent on him in regard to truthfulness (*al-ṣidq*), then he is thereby blameworthy, and has surely diminished his reliance and failed to discharge its mandate, and (hence) the appellation which is applied to others who stand up for what is right (*al-ḥaqq*) will not thereby be applicable to him.

And such is the case because the blameworthy person is he who transgresses the limits in contravention of what he has been commanded to uphold with regard to doing what is right, while he acknowledges the wrongfulness of his action and censures himself upon coming to his senses about his situation and

78. i.e., wrongfully.

79. *al-Baqarah*, 2: 188.

80. *al-Baqarah*, 2: 267.

81. *al-Baqarah*, 2: 267.

82. i.e., the Prophet, Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him.

83. i.e., in regard to the pursuit of livelihoods.

84. i.e., this obligation which is agreed upon.

85. or hassle and worry.

affirms that his action constitutes an iniquity against his Lord; and (yet) all the while his bonds of belief (*al-ʿuqūd*) remain firm in that which renders the appellation of reliance applicable to him—as we have described—such that he does not become deprived of what renders him deserving of the belief of the heart and affirmation of the tongue, except by (deliberately) disavowing them or forgoing them through denial or skepticism. We have clarified this matter at the beginning of the book.⁸⁶ This then is the blameworthy feature (that may occur) in the course of his activity.⁸⁷

And as for what is praiseworthy with respect to engagement in activity, the foremost of it is what we have described regarding the discharge of the duty of obedience to Allāh—glorified be He—in the course of engaging in activity, and the seeking of concord (*al-muwāfaqa*) with Allāh—glorified be He—by what pertains to obedience in this activity, and by refraining (*al-wuqūf*) from exceeding the limits, in order that he may thereby be characterized in his activity by consummate scrupulousness (*waraʿ*), utmost vigilance (*al-hadhr*) and resolute mindfulness (*al-taḥwā*). So, when he discharges all that according to their respective requirements, then such will be the foremost of the praiseworthy activities rendered permissible for him by Allāh—glorified and exalted be He.

And of the praiseworthy activities, among the highest in degree and ranking, are those by which Allāh—glorified be He—has characterized the Companions of Muḥammad—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him. He has characterized them in respect of their (high) stations⁸⁸ that they had attained in the course of these activities, and likewise the majority of the Followers after them, and the Select (*khawāṣṣ*) of the believers throughout the ages and epochs. These are those who have stood out over the generality of people with regard to their exceptional reliance, and with respect to the rest of the spiritual stations (*al-manāzil*). Their superiority over others in this regard is well recognized, and their standing in the sight of Allāh is lofty. This is the reality of reliance and its firm-rootedness, and this is the loftiness on the apex of that upon which the Prophets and the Truthful and the Select of the believers are stationed.

And alongside their perfection of the very foundation of the duty of reliance, they further stood out over the others by their superior understanding,⁸⁹ and

86. i.e., in Chapter One or the section right after the author’s preamble; see excerpt 1 above.

87. i.e., such shortcomings as such do not negate the applicability of the appellation of reliance to him unless he consciously disavows the imperative of reliance or the belief that all sustenance comes from Allāh alone; such a person’s reliance is deficient and his is blameworthy for failing to render it its due.

88. This refers to their high ethico-moral and spiritual stations.

89. i.e., knowledge of spiritual realities.

their abundant work in realizing that understanding in practice for the sake of Allāh—glorified and exalted be He—through the purification of their hearts (*tahārat al-qulūb*), perpetuity in remembrance (*idāmat al-dhikr*), intense dedication in drawing near (*al-taḥarrub*) to Allāh—glorified be He—by way of supererogatory devotions (*al-nawāfil*), and taking pains and doing their utmost in giving good counsel (*naṣiḥah*) to their own selves and in seeking to attain the good graces (*al-haḏwah*) of their Lord.

These ethical dispositions (*al-akhlāq*) which have so taken hold of them prevented them from indulging in those activities that were rendered permissible for them. For them, these activities were fenced off from them due to what they found lacking in these activities with regard to the remembrance of their Most Noble Lord,⁹⁰ and due to their preference on their part for what would draw them near to Him through remembrance, for the superiority of working for Allāh (*al-ʿamal liʾllāh*)—glorified and exalted be He—by means of obedience to Him was obvious to them; and due to their preference for what would commend them to Him by way of abandoning their desires (*al-shahawāt*) and withdrawing from the abode of ruin (*dār al-āfāt*).⁹¹

Therefore they became withdrawn and disengaged from the activities of natural disposition (*ḥarakāt al-ṭabʿ*), and they found it unbearable to pay heed to any cause that would call them towards what was other than Him. They were wont to flee away from any slackness that would seduce them into taking respite,⁹² and they were indifferent to any inducement that would induce them towards the accumulation of wealth. They were given over to applying themselves assiduously to devotional practices that drew them close to Allāh.

Obedience has rendered them to be resolute in their aspirations for devotional practice to the extent of their capacity for it, and cleared for them the path of sagacity in it, such that they harboured no desire to substitute for something else what was attained by the successful⁹³ among them, nor would they incline to turn away from any of that attainment in the least.

And so they attained to that state as a grace (*tawfiq*) from their Lord, as a firm succor amply bestowed on them, and a sublime benevolence from which they are never cut off. And thus they remained perpetual in that state, such that their deeds were purified, and they found success in their aspirations without being overcome by their lower desires (*hawāʾ*), nor confronted by an

90. i.e., Allāh Most High.

91. i.e., the seduction of ephemeral, worldly life; this means that they forgo activities of livelihood when they find these to be obstructive of their remembrance of Allāh, but they do not thereby trouble people with beggary or live at the expense of others.

92. i.e., respite from the duty of remembrance.

93. i.e., the successful in attaining to the spiritual stations.

overbearing adversary, nor seduced by the false expectations of their souls.

Their gnosis⁹⁴ (*al-ʿilm bi Allāh*) of Allāh has extinguished from them their lower desires, and overcome for them their adversaries, and reinforced for them their resolve, and rendered firm for them their affairs. Thus they found for themselves success each day and a subtle benevolence from Allāh all the time, as well as a guiding support from their Lord.

Such were their spiritual qualities, which were lofty in commensuration with their (individual) capacities, and in accord with the path of practice to which they were facilitated by virtue of the grace of their knowledge of Allāh Most High, such that they occupied themselves in perpetual devotional works in line with the loftiness of their state.

These were the activities (*al-ḥarakāt*) that were prevalent with them rather than other activities. Their desire for concordance with the divine (*al-muwāfaqah*) was predominant in their hearts, as was their attention to those works by means of which they may reach Allāh—glorified be He—without harbouring concern for what would suffice them and be secured for them as regards their sustenance and other matters. And hence, they were not inclined to the dissipation of their time or preoccupation with going after what would suffice them, or the desiring of what people desired of accumulation.

However, in this respect, their Lord had rendered their affair bountiful for them, and appointed for them the discharge of it, as alluded in the saying of the Prophet—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him—“It is evil enough for a person that he should neglect those he has to provide for.”

And (likewise) his saying—on him be peace—“Everyone of you is a shepherd and everyone of you shall be questioned regarding his flock.”

Thus a person is a shepherd over what he puts to pasture, and he is duty bound to the caretaking of their affairs as an aspect of what pertains to the matter of the religion and the world (*amr al-dīn wa al-dunyā*). And so likewise those whom Allāh Most High has obligated him to provide for, and whose affairs He made incumbent on him to administer, such as the (maintenance of the affairs of) fathers, mothers, wives and small children, (namely, people) with regard to whom the Muslims are in agreement that taking care of their affairs is an obligation, and that forsaking them is a sin should they be in need (of support).

Thus, in this regard, the Prophet—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him—has said, “It is evil enough for a person to forsake those he has to provide for.”

The statement of the Prophet, Allāh bless and grant him peace, “It is evil enough that a person....,” is not to be taken to mean that it is not obligatory on him to provide for his dependents, or that it is not obligatory on the excuse that their provision is something optional for him that he could merely opt for. This

94. i.e., spiritual knowledge.

is because evil is an actual calamity and a punishment that is sure to befall, whereas Allāh—exalted be His praise—does not mete out punishment over the forsaking of what is not obligatory, for He has informed us that His threat (*waʿīd*) and His punishment (*ʿuqūba*) befall on those who sin against Him and go against His command.⁹⁵

And therefore their endeavour in the affairs of livelihood lies in pursuit of concordance (*al-muwāfaqah*)⁹⁶ on their part, and it expresses their desire for obedience. It is because of their clarity regarding the preoccupation with what is more deserving for them and more preferable for their souls that their endeavour in this respect is unlike the endeavour of those who desire accumulation (*al-kathra*). Therefore, should anything of the affairs of livelihood be incumbent on them, they would thereby endeavour in its pursuit. Such then is the nature of their endeavour even as their hearts through it all are always looking towards Allāh—glorified and exalted be He—and finding repose in Him, by way of a perpetual remembrance that is intimately nurtured in their hearts, and a perpetual gnosis enveloping them, and a responsiveness to Allāh that persists with them.

And because of that, their hearts shy away from the creaturely causes, and are disengaged from cravings due to incertitude, and emancipated from the shackles of (creaturely) causes and the repression of worldly people, even as they are at every moment in intimacy with their Lord, Who is in control over what they strive for, and Who knows that which lies concealed in their conscience.

They do not become slack in their communion with Him even as they pursue their livelihoods. They do not fall short of discharging anything that He has commanded of them (to discharge). This is because of what their prudent intellects understood of those commands by way of a sagacity to which they have been attuned, and attained to by virtue of their elevated knowledge (*al-ʿilm*) and gnosis (*al-maʿrifā*).

And their endeavour in the course of earning their livelihoods such as we have described it is of the best means of devotion to their Lord, and the most notable of deeds in the circumstance of their stations. For them, to be occupied in the pursuit of livelihood is more preferable to them than preoccupation with other things, because of what has become clear for them concerning the superiority of concordance with Him in the discharge of that which He calls them to and commands them to do.

This is the manner of their endeavour, and such an endeavour does not at all impair the purity of the remembrance that they nurture. It weakens neither the specific condition of the devotions of their hearts and their spiritual

95. i.e., the fact that such a forsaking is an evil shows that taking care of dependents is obligatory, not optional.

96. i.e., in concord with Allāh's command.

ranks nor the condition of the stations to be expected for them from the Most Gracious Lord. These then are the notable features of the activities of the truthful (*al-ṣiddiqīn*) and the saints (*al-awliyāʾ*) in the course of their earning of their livelihoods.

This is evidenced in the actions of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, ʿUmar al-Fārūq, ʿUthmān Dhū al-Nurayn,⁹⁷ ʿAlī bin Abī Ṭālib and most of the Companions of the Prophet—Allāh’s peace and blessing be on him—from among the select due to their companionship of him, and from among the elite due to their support for him. They were the lamps of the earth and its lanterns, the brilliance of the world and its adornment, and the leaders in virtue over the select of bygone nations, just as they shall be the foremost in obedience on the morrow in the Afterlife after the Prophets—on whom be peace. They were leaders in espousing the truth, bearers of knowledge, treasure-troves of wisdom, springs of piety, the steadfast in the discharge of the duties of the religion and its ordinances. They were those whose superior virtues Allāh—glorified and exalted be He—has clearly indicated by His profound wisdom on the tongue of His Prophet—Allāh’s peace and blessing be on him.

Thus Allāh—glorified and exalted be He—says, “*Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh. And those with him are hard against the disbelievers and merciful among themselves. You (O Muḥammad) see them bowing and falling prostrate (in worship), seeking bounty from Allāh and (His) acceptance. The mark of them is on their foreheads from the traces of prostration.*”⁹⁸

And He Most High says, “*O you who believe! Whosoever of you becomes a renegade from his religion, (know that in his stead) Allāh will bring forth a people whom He loves and who love Him, humble toward believers, stern toward disbelievers.*”⁹⁹

And He Most High says, “*O Prophet! Allāh is Sufficient for you and those who follow you of the believers.*”¹⁰⁰

And He says—glorified and exalted be He, “*Allāh was well pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance unto you beneath the tree.*”¹⁰¹

And thus He praised the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh—may Allāh bless him and grant him peace—in many places of His Book; and they are the most virtuous of the people of the earth after the Prophets—on whom be peace—and their deeds are the most virtuous of deeds and the most honourable. Their stations are the loftiest of stations and the highest.

97. He was also the Prophet’s son-in-law twice, being married to two of the prophet’s daughters, namely, Ruqayyah, and thereafter Umm Kulthum, when the first passed away.

98. *al-Faḥḥ*: 29.

99. *al-Māʾidah*: 54.

100. *al-Anfāl*: 64.

101. *al-Faḥḥ*: 18.

And so for that reason the Prophet—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him—has said, “Even if one of you were to give away in charity the magnitude of Uḥud¹⁰² in gold you will not attain to even a *mudd*¹⁰³ given out by anyone of them nor even a half of it.”

And the Prophet—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him—said, “The best of my community is the first of them.”

And he—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him—said, “The best of people are those of my century, then those who come after them, then those who come after them.”

And he—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him—said, “Allāh has indeed chosen my Companions over all the nations.”

And he—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him—said, “The best of people are those of the century amongst whom I was sent.”

And reports like these (that have reached us) from the Messenger of Allāh—blessing and peace of Allāh be on him—are many in the Sunnah.

We shall begin¹⁰⁴ by first mentioning Abū Bakr al-Ṣiḍḍīq—Allāh’s pleasure be with him—and proving our contention by invoking his deeds. He gave credence to the Messenger of Allāh¹⁰⁵—blessing and peace of Allāh be on him—when he was given the lie to, and provisioned him from out of his wealth when he was deprived; and he was his companion (*anīs*) in the cave when he was persecuted, his cohort (*jalīs*) in the cubicle (*al-‘arīsh*) on the day of Badr when he was attacked. He was the first to follow him and to believe in him; he whose many deeds were recounted on the tongue of Muḥammad—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him. He was the one upon whom the Muslims are agreed as the most virtuous after their Prophet—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him. They were pleased with him as their caliph after the passing away of their Messenger, due to what they saw of his—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him—appointment of him to the leadership of their prayer and for handling the important affairs of their religion.

He adhered in the conduct of the affairs (of the Muslims) to the path of the Chosen (*al-muṣṭafā*),¹⁰⁶ and pursued in it the way of the Favoured (*al-murtaḍā*),¹⁰⁷ and discharged Allāh’s command as the Prophets of yore had discharged it.

102. A mountain lying a few miles to the north of al-Madinah, the site of the famous battle of Uḥud.

103. A dry measure for grain, equivalent to about 0.51 liters; see Nuh Ha Mim Keller, *Reliance of the Traveller: A Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law* (Amana, 1997), 873.

104. i.e., to cite the example of the Companions.

105. i.e., he affirmed his truthfulness.

106. i.e., the path of the Prophet—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him.

107. i.e., the way of the Prophet—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him.

Thus he reunited Islam when it was disunited, and stood by it in its time of need when it was weakening, and protected its sanctuary when it was breached; and he patched with the truth its fissures when it ruptured, until it regained its integrity after it was split, and its strength after it was enfeebled, and its harmony after it was in disarray.

And the Muslims were agreed on him as being correct in what he did, and being just in all of his decisions. He was the firmest of people after his Prophet in his religion, and the most dutiful in carrying out its commands—Allāh's pleasure and mercy be with him. He never ceased to be upon his firm path and lucid goal until Allāh—glorified and exalted be He—took him unto Him as one extolled.

Among his actions after having been elected caliph was to bring the Muslims to concord with him on his course of conduct, which was to view the earning of livelihood in order to provide for dependents as the most meritorious of deeds, the most effectual of devotions, and the loftiest of obedience; and thus accordingly he proceeded to the market in order to earn his livelihood to provide for his dependents.

The Companions of the Messenger of Allāh—blessing and peace of Allāh be on him—came across him while he was in the market and said to him, “O Caliph of Allāh's Messenger, return to the (stewardship of the) affairs of the Muslims!”

He replied to them, “My delinquency¹⁰⁸ shall be disconcerting to my dependents. Appoint for me a proper remuneration.”

And his interlocutors on the issue were ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib—may Allāh be pleased with them. They appointed for him a stipend that he was comfortable with, and thereby he returned to the government of the affairs of the Muslims as soon as the needs of his dependents were well taken care of—may Allāh have mercy on him.

And ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb—may Allāh be pleased with him—was like him in virtue, in the firmness of his Islam, and in his support for the religion of Islam. He used to acquire his provisions and the provisions of his dependents, and accordingly it was related from him that he said, “Do you know what I deem permissible of this wealth? Two garments, one for the winter and one for the summer, a riding animal on which I go on pilgrimage, and a Qurayshi man's sustenance, such as that of one who is neither impoverished nor opulent.”¹⁰⁹ Then he turned his attention to the (government of the) affairs of the Muslims

108. i.e., he will be delinquent in providing for his dependents should he forsake his livelihood in the market.

109. i.e., the sustenance of a man of modest means from among the Quraysh, neither indigent nor affluent but self-sufficient.

and said, “By Allāh, I know not whether it is licit for me or not.”¹¹⁰

And likewise was ‘Uthmān bin ‘Affān—may Allāh be pleased with him. He was the next after them in respect of virtue, discharging his duty and having the concord of Muslims as regards his justice.¹¹¹

And likewise was ‘Alī bin Abī Ṭālib—may Allāh be pleased with him. He was next after them in respect of virtue, religion, knowledge and forbearance. He used to carry water for some of them¹¹²—a bucket-load in return for a date fruit. He had two *nāḍiḥān*¹¹³ on which he transposed *idhkhir*,¹¹⁴ by means of which¹¹⁵ he entered into marriage with Fāṭimah¹¹⁶—may Allāh be pleased with her.

The Prophet—Allāh’s peace and blessing be on him—associated Qays bin al-Rabī‘ with ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bin ‘Awf as brothers, upon which Qays said to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, “This is half of my wealth and I have two women; I shall forgo one of them for you.” Now, Qays’ wealth was silent wealth (*al-māl al-ṣāmīl*),¹¹⁷ of the kind that people coveted.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān said, “I have no need for that, but show me the way to the market.” And so he proceeded to the market to earn for himself and returned having obtained some amount of cooking butter (*samm*) and cottage cheese (*iqit*). That was a result of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s aptitude for earning and enterprise in order to seek profit (*al-thawāb*).¹¹⁸

And in that regard it was reported of the Prophet—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him—that he said, “The most wholesome of what a person eats is from his earning (*kasb*).”

And thus ‘Abd al-Raḥmān preferred to earn his own livelihood over accepting even the wholesome wealth of a man from among the Companions of Allāh’s Messenger—Allāh’s blessing and peace be on him—even though

110. This could mean that he was worried that even this meager amount of wealth was too much.

111. i.e., like Abū Bakr and ‘Umar before him, ‘Uthmān was also deemed just.

112. i.e., for some of the people of Madīnah. All the editions have *ba’dahum* (after them) instead of *ba’dahum* (for some of them), but the latter reading seems to me more fitting in the context; but if read *ba’dahum*, then it means he came after or succeeded them, and was engaged in the occupation of carrying water, or as a water carrier, watering date orchards.

113. i.e., two old female camels/or watering camels.

114. a kind of sweet smelling grass.

115. i.e., by means of what he earned from the work.

116. al-Zahrā’, daughter of the Prophet.

117. i.e., money in the form of gold and silver.

118. i.e., reward for work in this life and in the Afterlife.

this wealth was without any suspicion as regards its provenance, without any misgiving in the heart concerning its goodness, and it was offered to him without him asking for it nor showing intemperance on his part in respect of it.

This is our explanation as regards the question of activity in the pursuit of livelihood from the Book¹¹⁹ and the Tradition,¹²⁰ and the deeds of the notable Companions of Allāh's Messenger—Allāh's blessing and peace be on him.

Likewise the Followers after them from among whom it is obligatory on us to follow and take directions from. They were those whom Allāh—glorified and exalted be He—has enjoined on people to obey and to emulate. He—glorified and exalted be He—says, “*O you who believe! Obey Allāh, and obey the Messenger and those of you who are in authority.*”¹²¹

And they were the Companions of Muḥammad—on whom be peace—and those who came after them from among the righteous of the scholars (*ṣāliḥī al-ʿulamāʾ*). The reports regarding them as well as the arguments deriving from them are many. What we have conveyed and mentioned in this regard is sufficient if Allāh so wills. We beseech Allāh—glorified and exalted be He—for the best of facility in arriving at the truth.

119. i.e., the Book of Allāh (the Qurʾān).

120. i.e., the Sunnah of the Prophet—Allāh's blessing and peace be on him.

121. *al-Nisāʾ*, 4: 59.